

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 ICAE-00
INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-20 ACDA-12 IO-14
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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1151

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMCONSUL MADRAS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 6416

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TECH, IN, US

SUBJECT: INDIAN REACTION TO NRC DECISION ON ENRICHED URANIUM
LICENSE APPLICATION

1. THE NEW DELHI PRESS GAVE WIDE AND PRIMINENT COVERAGE
OVER THE WEEKEND TO REPORTS OF THE NRC'S REFUSAL TO ISSUE
AN EXPORT LICENSE FOR FUEL FOR TARAPUR. ALL THE REPORTS
NOTED THAT THE DECISION NOW RESTS WITH THE PRESIDENT, BUT
SEVERAL REFLECTED UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S NEXT
MOVE. (A NOTABLE EXCEPTION WAS "STATESMAN" WASHINGTON
CORRESPONDENT WARREN UNNA, WHO REPORTED THAT PRESIDENT
CARTER WAS EXPECTED TO REVERSE THE NRC DECISION.) MANY
ARTICLES ALSO DISCUSSED HOW LONG TARAPUR'S PRESENT FUEL
STOCK CAN BE EXPECTED TO LAST, THE GENERAL CONCLUSION
BEING SIX MONTHS. TECHNICAL OPTIONS WERE ALSO REVIEWED,
WITH THREE POSSIBILITIES GIVEN PARTICULAR PROMINENCE:
SHUT DOWN TARAPUR, SHIFT TO A MIXED URANIUM-PLUTONIUM
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FUEL, OR FIND ANOTHER ENRICHED URANIUM SUPPLIER
(FRANCE AND THE USSR WERE MENTIONED AS POSSIBLE SOURCES).
IN THIS CONNECTION, IT WAS NOTED (INCORRECTLY, WE
BELIEVE) THAT INDIA HAS STARTED REPROCESSING SPENT
FUEL FROM ITS RAJASTHAN POWER STATION.

2. COLUMNIST G.K. REDDY, WRITING IN THE APRIL 22

"HINDU," REPORTS THAT THE GOI'S FIRST REACTION TO THE NRC DECISION WAS "ONE OF DEEP REGRET COMBINED WITH STRONG RESENTMENT OVER THE DILATORY TACTICS THAT ARE BEING ADOPTED TO APPLY DIVERSE PRESSURES ON INDIA TO SUBMIT TO FULL SCOPE SAFEGUARDS ON ITS ENTIRE NUCLEAR PROGRAM." NOTING THAT THE NUCLEAR ISSUE IS BOUND TO COME UP EITHER AT ONE OF THE PM'S PRESS CONFERENCES IN THE US OR DURING HIS MEETINGS WITH CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS, REDDY PREDICTS THAT "THE ADVOCATES OF A TOUGH LINE AGAINST INDIA" WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE PM'S "PLAINSPEAKING" TO INTENSIFY THEIR OPPOSITION TO FURTHER SHIPMENTS OF FUEL TO TARAPUR. REDDY ALSO REPORTS CRITICISM IN POLITICAL CIRCLES OF INDIAN NUCLEAR PLANNERS FOR NOT FULLY ANTICIPATING THE "MANY DIFFICULTIES THE COUNTRY HAD TO CONTEND WITH AFTER ITS TEST EXPLOSION IN RESISTING THE MOUNTING INTERNATIONAL PRESSURES." THERE HAS, REDDY WRITES, "BEEN A CONSIDERABLE SETBACK" TO INDIA'S EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE SELF-RELIANCE IN ELECTRIC POWER GENERATION.

3. N.C. MENON, WRITING FROM WASHINGTON IN THE "HINDUSTAN TIMES," DECLARES THAT "THE NRC VOTE DEALS A SERIOUS BLOW TO INDO-US NUCLEAR COOPERATION AS INDEED TO RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES." IT IS "PRACTICALLY CERTAIN", HE WRITES, THAT CONGRESS WILL VETO ANY DECISION BY THE PRESIDENT TO SEND FUEL TO TARAPUR. ON THE OTHER HAND, T.V. PARASURAM, THE WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT OF THE UNCLASSIFIED

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"INDIAN EXPRESS" CONSIDERS THAT A CONGRESSIONAL VETO OF WHATEVER THE PRESIDENT SUGGESTS WOULD BE "SURPRISING."

4. MOST EDITORIAL WRITERS SEE THE NRC DECISION AS A US REPUDIATION OF ITS AGREEMENT TO SUPPLY FUEL FOR TARAPUR. MOREOVER, THEY SEE THE DECISION AS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF US "HYPOCRISY" IN BENDING ITS NUCLEAR POLICY FOR ITS EUROPEAN ALLIES, BUT NOT FOR INDIA. ONLY THE "HINDUSTAN TIMES" EXPRESSES CONFIDENCE THAT PRESIDENT CARTER WILL OVERRIDE THE NRC DECISION. THE CONGRESS-I "NATIONAL HERALD" NOTES THAT THE JANATA GOVERNMENT IS "SCRUPULOUSLY FOLLOWING" THE NUCLEAR POLICY "LAID DOWN BY THE CONGRESS GOVERNMENT IN THE PAST," WHILE THE PRO-COMMUNIST "PATRIOT" SUGGESTS THAT THE SPENT FUEL STORAGE PROBLEM WAS CREATED DELIBERATELY BY THE US TO PRESSURE INDIA.

5. FORMER PM GANDHI, ASKED OVER THE WEEKEND FOR HER REACTION TO THE NRC DECISION, SAID "IT IS UNFORTUNATE." SHE WENT ON TO SAY THAT IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT THE US DID NOT WANT INDIA TO HAVE NUCLEAR POWER.
GOHEEN

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